

## CHAPTER XIII

### MATERIAL PROGRESS

To preserve itself. Life enjoins upon each generation the imperative task of producing a generation to succeed it. Not a few creatures die as soon as this task is accomplished. But, generally, time remains for the care of oneself, as well as of posterity : and this may be spent by the individual, not merely in the search for food, or in the service of the herd, but in provident activities which appropriate or rearrange the things around it. In man, these activities have become so complicated and widespread as to overshadow the elementary interests of animal life : he owes to them his elaborate civilization, the contrivances by which he seems to command Nature in place of obeying her. But they are shared, in some degree, by lower animals, and appear to arise from a special instinct—that of *providence*—which prompts living creatures not to submit themselves to their environment—or slavishly to adapt themselves to it—but with active foresight to mould it to their needs. The construction of protective, and often very beautiful, shells is a distinctive feature in the life history of molluscs : and far below them, in the very lowest ranks of the animal kingdom, organisms which are mere specks of structureless jelly extract materials from the lime or silica in the water around them, for building shells, which, so small as to be invisible